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Harold A. Lett
A Biographical Sketch

Born in Adrian, Michigan, January 8, 1896. Educated in public schools of Toledo, Ohio; Erie, Pennsylvania; and Cass Lake, Minnesota, from which high school he was graduated in 1915. After six months in the harvest fields of North Dakota, he came to Lansing, Michigan which remained his home until 1930. There he attended Michigan State College, later taking additional courses in Rutgers University.

Married in 1916 at Lansing, Michigan and is the father of five grown children, two of whom served in the Armed Forces in the recent war.

From April 1918 until May 1921, he served as secretary-assistant to the Purchasing Agent of the Novo Engine Company of Lansing, a concern employing over 1500 men at that time. During the course of this employment, Lett recruited Negro labor in Illinois and Kansas, on a selective rather than wholesale plan. Also served unofficially as plant welfare worker for the many skilled and unskilled Negro workers employed by the concern.

In September 1921, Lett was engaged as typist in the Michigan Department of State. Until July 1924 he served as assistant to the bureau head in setting up the new Michigan Automobile Title Division, and finally as head of the correspondence and complaint section of this division.

In July 1924, Lett transferred to the Labor Department to serve as deputy director of the newly-created Division of Negro Welfare and Statistics. In this capacity, he outlined and directed studies of population trends and employment opportunities as they related to the Negro in Michigan. In 1927, he was promoted to the Statistical Division of the Michigan Labor Department and given full charge of this phase of the department's work, during which period, he was instrumental in opening negotiations with the Federal Labor Department for cooperative analyses and reporting of employment trends in Michigan industry.

While in this latter position, he was granted leave of absence on two occasions to serve as first assistant to the director of Michigan's first and second annual Automobile Testing Campaigns under Edwin A. Goodwin, then director of Industrial Safety for the State of Michigan.

In 1929, he was offered the position of industrial secretary in the Urban League of Pittsburgh to which he transferred in March 1930. After four years of service in this post, the position of Executive Secretary of the New Jersey Urban League was accepted in March 1934, in which position he served until July 1945.

He has been identified with a great number of Newark and Essex County civic organizations; was named as a member of the Newark Housing Authority in April 1938, subsequently being selected as vice-chairman of this body, serving until January 1942; was named by Governor Moore as a member of the Advisory Committee of the New Jersey Defense Council in 1940; was appointed to two national committees by the National Association of Housing Officials, one assignment being in the field of Public Relations and the other, to a committee on Relations between Local Authorities and the United States Housing Authority. In 1941, he was named to the State Fair Rent Committee of the New Jersey Defense Council by Governor Charles Edison, and in 1945 was appointed by Mayor Vincent J. Murphy to Newark's Emergency Housing Committee charged with the responsibility of providing homes for returning veterans.

With the passage of the Nation's second State Anti-Discrimination Law by the New Jersey legislature, following similar action in New York, Lett was appointed on July 1, 1945 to be Chief Assistant to the director of the new Division Against Discrimination by Commissioner John H. Bonshoft, with the approval of Governor Walter E. Edge whose administration sponsored the Act. In 1947, he was elected to the Executive Board of the N. J. Welfare Council and to the Continuation Committee of the newly-formed National Association of Intergroup Officials.

As a speaker on Housing and Race Relations, Lett has addressed audiences throughout New Jersey and in other parts of the Nation, has lectured in many colleges, and has contributed articles to a number of professional publications and periodicals, the January 1945 issue of The Harvard Educational Review being among the most recent contributions.